

Preventing substance abuse on APG



Understanding Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

ASAP

Alcohol withdrawal syndrome is a set of symptoms that people have when they suddenly stop drinking after using alcohol for a long period of time.

Some people have mild shakiness and sweats. Sleep disturbances are very commonly experienced after alcohol is withdrawn from the addicted body. Hypoglycemia or low blood sugar often occurs as well with its own set of symptoms when a physically addicted person tries to quit drinking.

Some people hallucinate (hear and see things that don't exist). The worst form of withdrawal is called "DTs" (delirium tremens). DTs have the potential for being fatal if not treated by a doctor.

Withdrawal symptoms rarely occur in people who only drink once in a while. Symptoms usually occur in people who have been drinking heavily for weeks or months and then suddenly stop drinking. People who have gone through withdrawal before are more likely to have withdrawal symptoms each time they quit drinking.

Seek medical attention

Doctors need to know when their patient is going through withdrawal so he or she can make sure it doesn't lead to more serious health problems or to make sure the wrong diagnosis/treatment isn't given for the patient's condition.

If someone goes through withdrawal a number of times without getting the right treatment, their symptoms may get worse each time. So even if the withdrawal symptoms don't seem so bad, it's important to see a doctor.

This is especially true for people who have had a bad withdrawal before and people who have other health problems, such as infections, heart disease, lung disease or a history of seizures.

People who quit using other drugs (such as tobacco, injected drugs or cocaine) at the same time they stop drinking alcohol might have

severe withdrawal problems. They should see a doctor before they quit.

Severe alcohol withdrawals can be fatal or they can merely seem like a bad hangover. It takes a doctor to discern when immediate medical attention is needed.

The doctor can keep track of withdrawal symptoms so that more serious health problems don't develop.

Symptoms of mental illness may also occur along with the physical withdrawal symptoms and these will need to be addressed by a doctor as well. There are prescription medicines which can be prescribed to help alleviate withdrawals and reduce physical discomfort. He or she can also give emotional support.

Help from family, friends

The urge to drink again during withdrawal can be very strong. Some people may put themselves into dangerous situations.

After withdrawal symptoms go away, it's important for the person to join a treatment or sobriety program, such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Support from family and friends can help a person find success in one of these programs.

For more information on sobriety programs in the local area, contact Cindy Scott, ASAP prevention coordinator, at 410-278-3784, or e-mail Cynthia.Scott1@apg.army.mil, or Bill Sanchious, ASAP EAP provider at 410-278-3519, or e-mail William.sanchious@apg.army.mil, stop by the office in building 2477 and speak with a staff member, or visit the ASAP Web site www.apg-intra.apg.army.mil/apg/asap/ and click on the blue ASAP box on the right side of the APG Web page.

TRICARE eligible individuals can seek help also through Kirk U.S. Army Health Clinic. Dianne Hoffman is the clinical director at KUSAHC for APG substance abuse treatment programs and can be reached at 410-278-1737.

LEAVE DONATIONS

To participate in the Voluntary Leave Program, use forms OPM 630, Application to Become a Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program; OPF 630-A, Request to Donate Annual Leave to Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (within agency); and

OPM 630-B, Request to Donate Annual Leave to Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (outside agency). For more information, call Ronda McKinney, 410-278-8988, or e-mail rondamckinney@usag.apg.army.mil.

Employees eligible for donations in the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

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